

Message Text

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ACTION IO-13

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EB-11 OMB-01 L-03 PM-09 NSC-10 SS-15 RSC-01 CIAE-00

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R 101404 Z APR 73

FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4119

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 372

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID, SREF, XF

SUBJ: FY 74 US FLOUR CONTRIBUTION TO UNRWA

REF: STATE 064591

SUMMARY: CONTEMPLATED CUT- BACK IN FLOUR WOULD BE EVIDENT AT ONCE TO WEST BANK REFUGEES, AND KNOWLEDGE OF US RESPONSIBILITY WOULD SHORTLY FOLLOW. THERE WOULD DOUBTLESS BE INCREASED BITTERNESS TOWARD US, BUT OVERT OR VIOLENT REACTION HIGHLY UN- LIKELY. EVEN THIS MUCH ADDITIONAL BURDEN TO US- PALESTINIAN RELATIONS OBVIOUSLY UNDESIRABLE. FROM LOCAL EXPERIENCE, HOWEVER, WE ARE NOT IMPRESSED WITH ARGUMENT THAT RATION ROLLS WILL BE SYSTEMATICALLY REDUCED BY UNRWA IF US MAINTAINS LEVEL OF ITS CONTRIBUTION. WE SUGGEST PUTTING PRESSURE ON UNRWA TO CUT RATION ROLLS, WHILE REDUCING LIKELIHOOD OF SERIOUS OUTCRY, BY PHASING REDUCTION IN FLOUR OVER MORE THAN ONE YEAR. END SUMMARY.

1. IF REDUCTION IN US FLOUR CONTRIBUTION MEANT CUT IN NUMBER OF RATIONS OR THINNING OUT OF FLOUR COMPONENT IN EACH RATION, WEST BANK REFUGEES WOULD NO DOUBT BE FULLY AWARE ALMOST AT
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ONCE THAT THIS HAD BEEN DONE. THEY WATCH THESE THINGS VERY CAREFULLY. IT WOULD ALSO BECOME KNOWN BEFORE LONG THAT CUT-BACK IN US CONTRIBUTION WAS RESPONSIBLE. EXACT NATURE OF REASONS BEHIND CUT- BACK, EVEN IF THEY WERE SIMPLER THAN THEY ARE, WOULD NOT BE UNDERSTOOD AND GENERAL ASSUMPTION WOULD DOUBTLESS BE THAT US WAS ONCE AGAIN SHOWING ITS INDIFFERENCE TO THE PALESTINIANS.

2. BEYOND SOME INCREASED BITTERNESS, OR A FEELING THAT THEIR READING OF US ATTITUDES HAD AGAIN BEEN CONFIRMED, WE DOUBT THAT THERE WOULD BE ANY REACTION FROM REFUGEES, HOWEVER. THERE WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT BE ANY OVERT OR VIOLENT DEMONSTRATIONS. FOR ONE THING, WEST BANKERS ARE NOT MUCH GIVEN TO DEMONSTRATIONS UNDER WATCHFUL EYE OF ISRAELI SECURITY FORCES. IN ADDITION, LESS THAN QUARTER OF THESE REFUGEES ARE IN CAMPS, AND CAMPS THEMSELVES ARE FAIRLY SMALL AND SCATTERED. FINALLY, REFUGEES ARE NOT TOO BADLY OFF IN GENERAL AND WOULD NOT SUFFER MATERIALLY FROM CUT OF RATIONS. MOST VOCAL OUTCRY WOULD LIKELY COME FROM UNRWA LOCAL STAFF.

3. WEST BANK UNRWA DIRECTOR GRAHAM FEELS THAT IF UNRWA WERE FACED WITH CUT- BACK IN FLOUR, HE WOULD HAVE TO THIN OUT EACH RATION RATHER THAN CUT TOTAL NUMBER. HE ADMITS THIS WOULD WEIGH EQUALLY ON THOSE WHO REALLY NEED FOOD AND THOSE WHO DON' T, BUT BELIEVES THERE WOULD BE NO SENSIBLE WAY TO REDUCE NUMBER OF RATION RECIPIENTS ON BASIS OF THEIR NEED. SOMEWHAT MORE THAN 120,000 WEST BANK REFUGEES (ABOUT 50 PERCENT OF TOTAL) RECEIVE RATIONS. GRAHAM STATES HE IS GRADUALLY WEEDING OUT THOSE WHO ARE ACTUALLY SELF- SUPPORTING, BEGINNING WITH MOST OBVIOUS CASES-- THOSE WHO EARN IN NEIGHBORHOOD OF 80 TO 100 JORDANIAN DINARS MONTHLY (A GOOD SALARY BY LOCAL STANDARDS). HE HOPES TO DROP BETWEEN 1,000 AND 2,000 CASES THIS YEAR, BUT NOTES THEY WILL BE REPLACED WITH SOME LAG BY REFUGEES NOW ON WAITING LIST FOR OPENINGS ON RATION ROLLS (ABOUT 60,000). EXCEPT FOR MOST OBVIOUS CASES OF PROSPERITY, GRAHAM SAYS IT IS DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN SORT OF INFORMATION NECESSARY TO DETERMINE ELIGIBILITY FOR RATIONS.

4. GRAHAM NOTED THAT, WITH DOLLAR DEVALUATION, POSSIBLE FLOUR CUT- BACK, COST- OF- LIVING WAGE INCREASES FOR STAFF, ETC., HE MIGHT HAVE TO CONSIDER CUTTING PROGRAMS. HE MENTIONED THAT IN HIS VIEW SUPPLEMENTARY FEEDING WOULD BE A PRIME CANDI-
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DATE. SINCE THIS ATTITUDE APPEARS TO BE SHARED BY UNRWA HEAD-

QUARTERS, WE WONDER WHETHER UNRWA COMGEN HAS CONSIDERED TRYING TO PERSUADE EEC THAT THEIR CONTRIBUTION SHOULD BE DISENGAGED FROM SUPPLEMENTARY FEEDING AND USED FOR HIGHER PRIORITY PURPOSES.

5. COMMENT: WE RECOGNIZE WE HAVE MUCH LESS EXPLOSIVE SITUATION HERE THAN IN OTHER REFUGEE HOST COUNTRIES. WE RECOGNIZE ALSO THAT SUCH RELATIONS AS WE HAVE WITH PALESTINIANS DO NOT NEED ANY MORE NEGATIVE BAGGAGE OF THIS SORT. AT SAME TIME, WE ARE NOT IMPRESSED FROM WHAT WE SEE LOCALLY BY ARGUMENT THAT REDUCTION OF RATIONS ROLLS WILL PROCEED IN ORDERLY FASHION IF ONLY WE GIVE UNRWA TIME. WEST BANK IS PRIME TARGET FOR SUCH AN OPERATION. BUSES DRIVE AWAY FROM REFUGEE CAMPS EVERY MORNING FULL OF WORKERS HEADED FOR ISRAEL WHERE THEY MAKE A FAIRLY GOOD WORKINGMAN' S WAGE. EVEN SO, IT IS CLEAR THAT AT PRESENT RATE RATION ROLLS WILL REMAIN FOR INDEFINITE FUTURE AT CEILING ESTABLISHED YEARS AGO AND MAINTAINED EVER SINCE. WAITING LIST REFUGEES WILL SIMPLY REPLACE WHATEVER MINOR CUTS ARE MADE. OPPOSITION OF SENIOR LOCAL STAFF TO ANY CUTS IN RATION ROLLS IS SO STRONG AND DETERMINED THAT GRAHAM IS HAVING TO RUN HIS MODEST SURVEY FROM HIS OWN OFFICE. ATTITUDE OF STAFF IS CLEARLY POLITICAL AND HAS LITTLE TO DO WITH WHETHER OR NOT THESE REFUGEES NEED RATIONS.

6. FROM LOCAL PERSPECTIVE, THEREFORE, WE SEE LITTLE LIKELIHOOD OF MOVEMENT TO MORE REASONABLE RATIONS OPERATION UNLESS US TIGHTENS THE SCREWS. TO DO SO ALL AT ONCE ON SCALE WASHINGTON IS NOW CONTEMPLATING WOULD PERHAPS BE COSTLY POLITICALLY. WOULD IT NOT BE POSSIBLE TO PHASE A REDUCTION, PERHAPS THROUGH USE OF COMPROMISE PRICE, WITH PURPOSE OF BRINGING ABOUT REDUCTION OF SCALE NOW FORESEEN WITHIN, SAY, TWO OR THREE YEARS? UNRWA WOULD BE LEFT IN NO DOUBT THAT RATIONS HAD TO BE CUT SHARPLY BUT AID COULD SUFFICIENTLY BE SPREAD OUT THAT EXPLOSIVE REACTION WOULD AT LEAST BE MUTED.

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